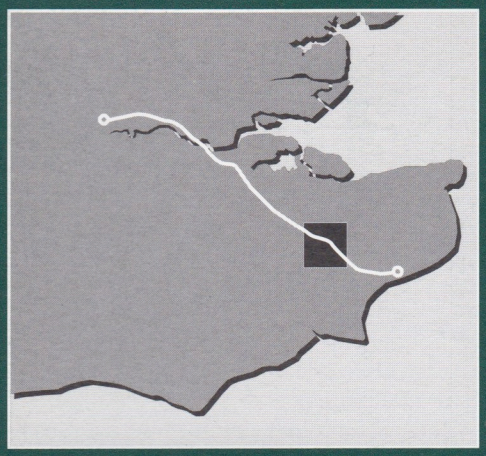

union
RAILWAYS

Charing Heath to Mersham

The new Union Railway described

Charing Heath to Mersham

The Union Railway will run north of Ashford, along the northern side of the motorway, instead of taking the previously safeguarded route through the centre of Ashford.

Following the M20 motorway east from Charing Heath, the Union Railway will have a junction near Westwell Leacon. This new Ashford Junction will enable trains to and from Ashford and east Kent to use the Union Railway. Plans for Ashford International Station are unchanged by this choice of route.

The Union Railway north of Ashford will pass between Ashford and Kennington at Bybrook, and tunnel under the M20 at Willesborough Lees.

Network SouthEast express trains will cut about half an hour from present journeys, by using the Union Railway between Ashford and London.

Open for detailed route information

THE UNION RAILWAY

This booklet provides information about the route which the Government has announced for the Union Railway, the high-speed railway between London and the Channel Tunnel.

The Union Railway is designed to provide:

- **The main railway between Britain and continental Europe.**
- **A major increase in capacity and improvement in the quality of journeys between Kent, Essex and London.**
- **The transport spine for the development of the East Thames Corridor.**

The route has been chosen by the Government from options developed by Union Railways Limited, the agency company set up by British Rail in 1992. The engineering, environmental and financial plans for the Union Railway have been produced in association with more than 40 leading private-sector consultancies.

The detailed proposals for the railway will be refined and developed only after consultation with those affected. You can find out more by visiting our Information Centres - dates and times of their visits to your area will be announced in the local press.

This booklet also gives brief details of Union Railways policy on a range of issues - you can find more information in other Union Railways leaflets.

WHY IS THE UNION RAILWAY NEEDED?

The Union Railway will provide the essential capacity to meet fast-rising demand for international rail travel, following the opening of the Channel Tunnel. Around the turn of the century, the existing railways in Kent and South-East London will be unable to cope with the predicted growth in demand for travel.

The Union Railway will also offer major improvements in the quality of journeys between Kent, Essex and London - much faster journeys, greater reliability, and a wider range of destinations.

The Union Railway will carry both the growing international traffic, and more than 25,000 commuters each day, in much less space than a motorway, with much less damage to the environment.

As international trains and Network SouthEast express trains will use the Union Railway, existing railways will have more room, not only for improvements to passenger services, but also for international freight traffic attracted by the Channel Tunnel. This freight would otherwise cause a major increase in lorry journeys, and up to 45 million kg of additional exhaust emissions every year. The Union Railway could also itself carry freight.

THE CHOICE OF ROUTE

The route chosen by the Government, and described in this booklet, is based on the easterly approach to London, which the Government adopted in 1991. That corridor has been studied to find a route which is capable of meeting environmental standards, and which can provide regeneration opportunities and improved rail services within the South-East. While principally conceived as a twin-track, high-speed passenger railway, the route is also capable of carrying freight trains.

The new route runs to the Channel Tunnel from a new station at Kings Cross/St Pancras in London. It can also carry international trains from London Waterloo via the existing London to Chatham line and a link line from Longfield to the Union Railway near Gravesend.

BENEFITS FOR THE SOUTH-EAST

More than half of the peak-period trains on the new railway will be for travellers within South-East England. With new Network SouthEast express trains, the Union Railway can transform rail travel between Kent, Essex and London. It will carry many more people, with much shorter journey times, more reliably and in much greater comfort, to new destinations.

The Union Railway presents opportunities to support the South-East's economy, by improving transport links for development in the East Thames Corridor and for other regeneration projects along its route.

LIMITING DISTURBANCE

The Union Railway route is the result of a comprehensive sifting process, which rejected any option which did not meet the environmental standards normally applied to major infrastructure projects. Scope to further limit effects on people, property and the environment will be discussed during the consultation process - the results of this will be carefully taken into account.

It is intended that the construction of the Union Railway will be carried out under a strictly enforced Code of Practice, to be drawn up in consultation with Local Authorities. Construction traffic would use railway land whenever possible, to limit disturbance.

PROPERTY EFFECTS

By next winter, the detailed route of the new railway is expected to be reserved, or "safeguarded", against other development. It is expected that details of property purchase arrangements will be announced at that stage.

DISCUSS YOUR CONCERNS

Union Railways wants householders, property owners, and all others affected by its proposals to have an opportunity to discuss them in detail with designers, planners and environmental specialists. This will be possible at the Information Centres which will be visiting about 40 locations along the route. The location and opening hours of the Centres will be announced in the local press.

Consultation is also being carried out with Local Authorities and other interested bodies. The Information Centres will return in the autumn to provide details of the outcome of the consultation process.

The Information Centres are intended to provide the best opportunity for direct contact with Union Railways. But if you are unable to visit one of the Centres, or if you would like more information, then please write to the address overleaf, or phone 081 760 5002 and speak to one of the liaison team.

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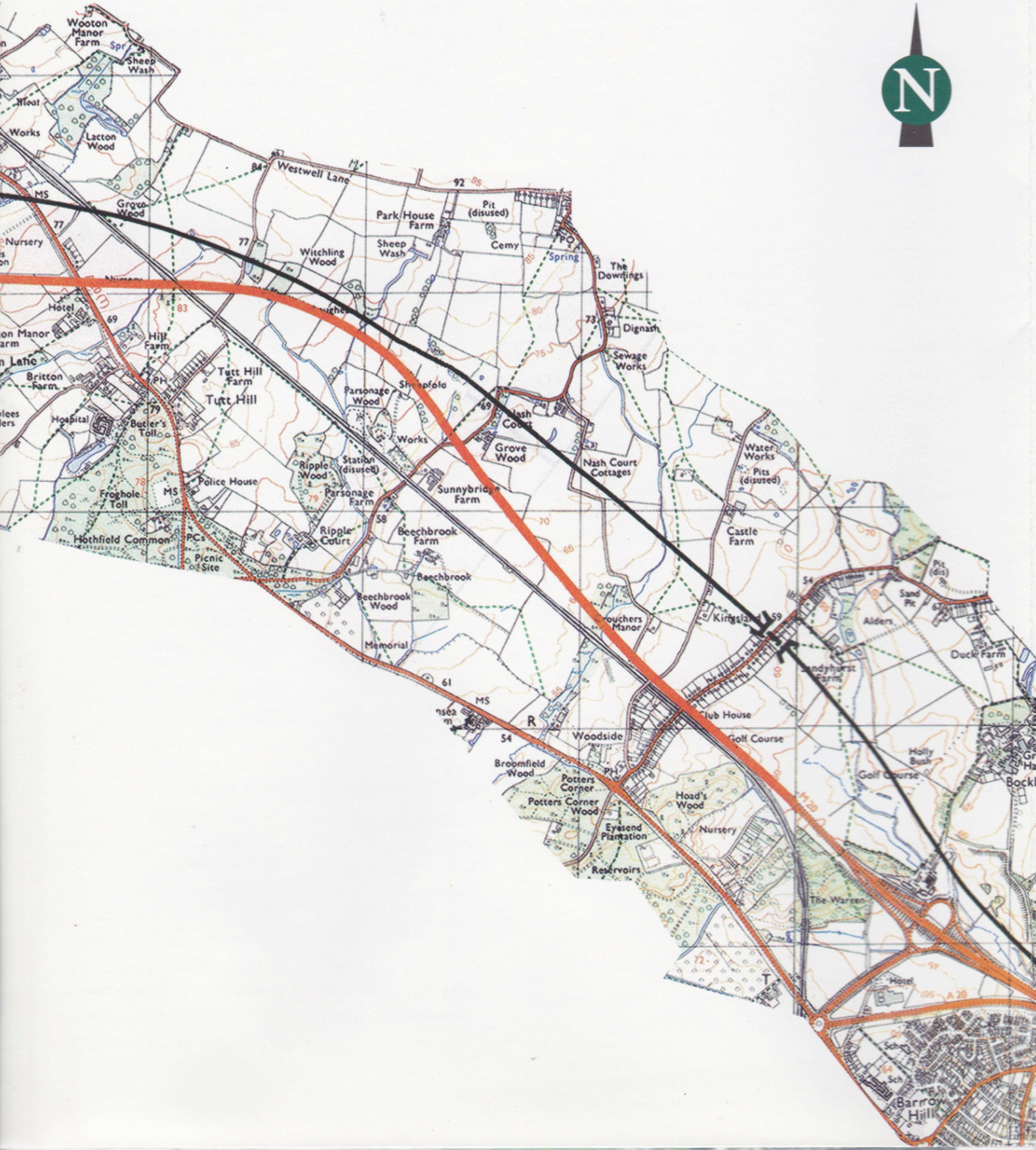
KEY

The Union Railway

Surface

Tunnel


N
Wooton Manor Farm
Sheep Wash
Works
Lacton Wood
Westwell Lane
Grove Wood
Nursery
Park House Farm
Pit (disused)
Sheep Wash
Cemy
Spring
Witchling Wood
The Downings
Dignash
Sewage Works
Hotel
Hill Farm
Tutt Hill Farm
Tutt Hill
Britton Farm
Hospital
Butler's Toll
Parsonage Wood
Sheepfold
Works
Grove Wood
Nash Court Cottages
Water Works
Pits (disused)
Station (disused)
Ripple Wood
Parsonage Farm
Police House
Froghole Toll
Sunnybridge Farm
Hothfield Common
Picnic Site
Ripple Court
Beechbrook Farm
Beechbrook
Beechbrook Wood
Castle Farm
Kingsland
Alders
Sand Pit
Duck Farm
Memorial
Club House
Golf Course
Woodside
Broomfield Wood
Potters Corner
Potters Corner Wood
Hoad's Wood
Eyesend Plantation
Nursery
Reservoirs
Holly Bush
The Warren
Hotel
Barrow Hill

Charing Heath to Mersham

Ashford: Sandyhurst Lane and M20

Ashford: Willesborough Lees, M20 junction 10

CHARING HEATH

Running on the north side of the M20 motorway, the new Union Railway route passes to the south of Charing Heath. Two listed buildings at Brockton Farm lie across the route. They will be carefully taken down, and could be rebuilt elsewhere.

The route closely matches the motorway in both its horizontal and vertical alignments, to keep visual intrusion to a minimum. At Hurst Wood, it stays close to the M20 to avoid severing this ancient woodland.

The location of freight facilities for the Union Railway will be the subject of public consultation. South of Charing Heath, additional tracks might be provided, on which slower-moving freight trains could wait for passenger trains to pass.

WESTWELL LEACON

The railway route curves to the south of Westwell Leacon, and a junction will be built with the existing Maidstone-Ashford railway.

Stud Cottage and a barn on the Calehill Stud lie across the route and will be demolished. The setting of the listed Rose Cottage will be altered, with some land taken, where the route runs almost at ground level as it changes from embankment into cutting.

A short tunnel will carry Leacon Lane over the Union Railway. Two properties in Leacon Lane (Cosy Lodge and Hollycombe) will be demolished.

At Westwell Leacon, there will be a flyover junction between the Union Railway and the existing Maidstone to Ashford railway, to give access from the Union Railway to Ashford for both International and Network SouthEast express train services.

The connecting line which will take trains from East Kent and Ashford to the Union Railway will be to the south of the Union Railway. It will run on an embankment and cross the A20. The other connecting line, carrying trains from the Union Railway to Ashford and East Kent, will diverge on the north side of the Union Railway. It will be carried on an embankment and will bridge the A20 and the main Union Railway. Opportunities for landscaping will be discussed during public consultation.

The route continues along the north side of the M20, by-passing Tutt Hill. It keeps close to the motorway, though a high-speed railway cannot precisely follow the relatively sharp curvature of the motorway here. The railway route avoids properties at Grove Wood.

Between Westwell Leacon and Sandyhurst Lane, the railway will run on a series of shallow embankments and cuttings through an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Appropriate landscaping will be discussed during public consultation.

SANDYHURST LANE

The Union Railway runs in a cutting to the west of the Sandyhurst Lane area, and runs under the Lane in a short covered cutting, avoiding any demolition. The route stays at a distance from the motorway to minimise the effect on residential property. It runs to the north of housing on the west side of Sandyhurst Lane, and takes advantage of the vacant plot on the east side.

The new railway will emerge from a cutting east of Sandyhurst Lane, and will run on a shallow embankment across Ashford golf course and Ashford Warren. Further east, the route passes through the proposed business park and associated development, between Bockhanger and Junction 9 of the M20 motorway.

NORTH OF ASHFORD

West of Canterbury Road, the Union Railway will pass close to the edge of Bybrook Cemetery. A retaining wall will be provided so that the cemetery is undisturbed. New access will be provided to the Police Training College.

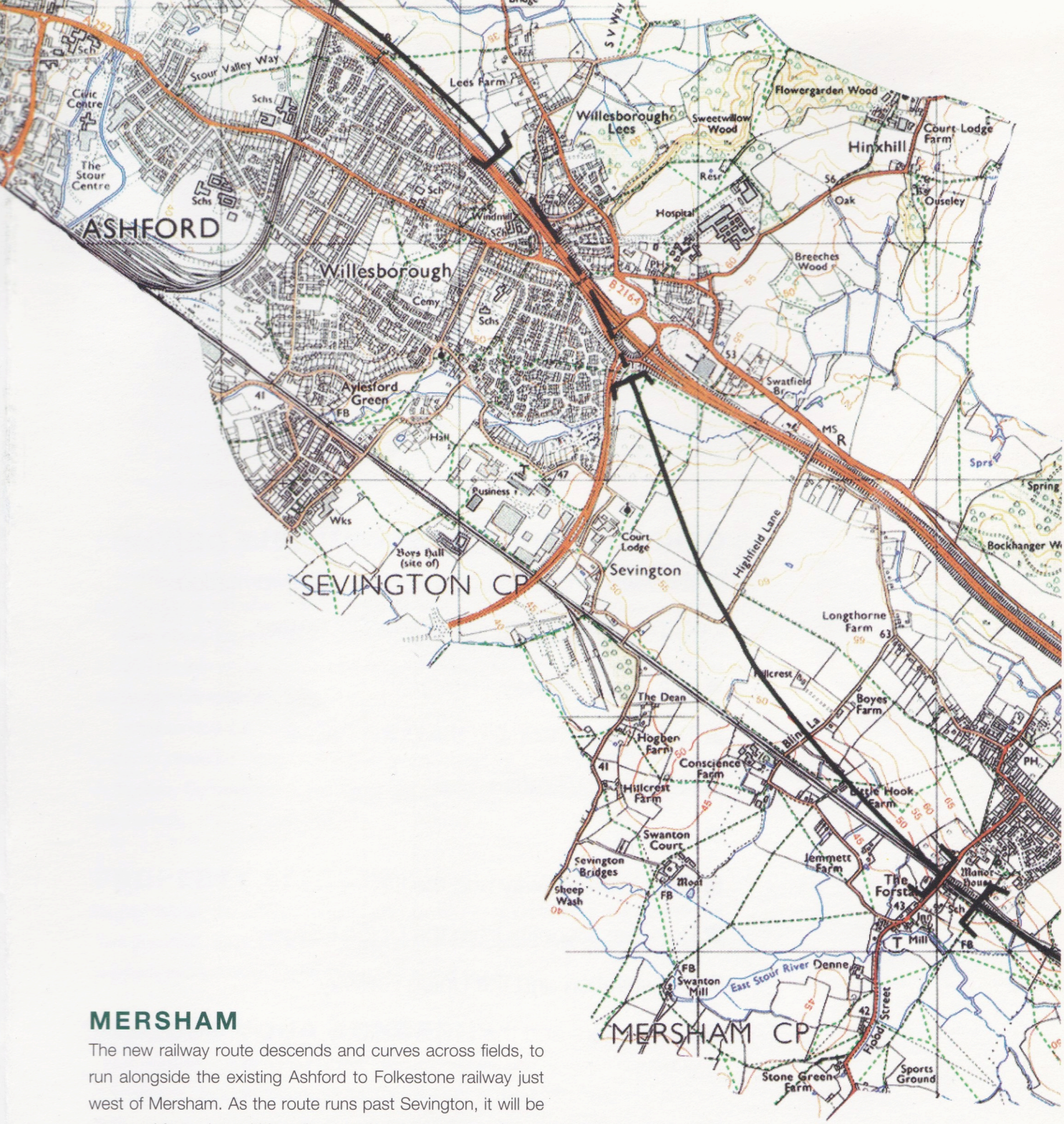
The Union Railway will cross the A28 Canterbury Road at Bybrook, next to the M20, and the road will be reprofiled to pass over the railway. One property, Brookside, will be demolished. Sports fields and a garden centre also lie across the route.

The railway will cross the Great Stour, and run through the sewage works, part of which will be reconstructed.

WILLESBOROUGH LEES

The Union Railway will bridge the Ashford-Canterbury railway and pass in tunnel under the M20 motorway near Willesborough Lees.

The tunnel will take the railway under Silver Hill Road, houses at the south end of Willesborough Lees, the M20 motorway and the slip roads around Junction 10. The first 200 metres of tunnel west of the Silver Hill Road ambulance station will be in covered cutting (creating a "cut and cover" tunnel), and the remainder will be bored for about 900 metres. Construction of the bored part of the tunnel will probably be carried out from its entrance south of the motorway.



MERSHAM

The new railway route descends and curves across fields, to run alongside the existing Ashford to Folkestone railway just west of Mersham. As the route runs past Sevington, it will be screened from view within a deep cutting.

Approaching Mersham from the west, the Union Railway will run close to the listed Loud House and Bridge House, taking some land from them.

The Union Railway will pass through Mersham in a section of roofed-over cutting, covering both the Union Railway and existing railway. This maintains the environmental measures agreed in previous consultations, which will lessen effects on the community, and on the group of historic buildings close to the church. The meadow running from the church will be extended over the top of the covered cutting. The landscaping and protection against noise which were previously proposed east of Mersham will also be provided.

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RAILWAYS

OTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE

These leaflets can be obtained from the Information Centres, or by writing to the address below:

- The Union Railway
- The Environment and the Union Railway
- Noise and Vibration
- Tunnelling
- The Union Railway and the UK
- Business Benefits from the Union Railway
- Consultation and the Union Railway
- Commuters and the Union Railway

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